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**Linguistic Prejudice and Discrimination in Brazilian Portuguese and beyond: Suggestions and Recommendations**

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***Abstract***

*In this article we make a distinction between the prejudice and discrimination towards (a) different languages and their speakers and (b) different non-standard varieties of the same language and their speakers and argue that whilst the discrimination and prejudice towards (a) have been denounced by international institutions and both national and international laws are in place to guarantee the rights of speakers of different languages, the same protection has not been afforded to speakers of non-standard varieties of a language. We examine a specific case of this type of linguistic prejudice in Brazil. We discuss the effectiveness of efforts of linguists to combat linguistic prejudice based on the principle of error correction (Labov 1982) and, drawing on work by Cameron (2012) and Bourdieu (1986) suggest that linguistic prejudice cannot be disentangled from other types of prejudice and that linguists need to have a much deeper understanding of and engagement with the values attached to linguistic forms. We conclude with a number of suggestions and recommendations in order to effectively combat linguistic prejudice.*

## 1 Introduction: what is linguistic prejudice and discrimination?

Simply stated linguistic prejudice refers to the preconceived opinions that people can have about EITHER an entire category of individuals based on their use of language OR a language/language variety and its appropriate domains of usage. Such opinions are irrational generalisations since they are not based on actual experience of the individuals or knowledge of the language/language variety; they are feelings and beliefs about individuals based on the way they speak and about languages/language varieties based on the people who speak them and the appropriateness of their social usages based on the domains to which they have been confined historically.

Linguistic discrimination differs from linguistic prejudice in that it takes the beliefs and feelings involved in linguistic prejudice and turns them into actions (Bagno 2002, Leite 2008). Linguistic discrimination manifests itself in the negative, distinct and unjust treatment of EITHER individuals due to the way they speak OR languages/language varieties due to ingrained assumptions of the appropriate domains of usage. In the first case, linguistic discrimination could entail people not being given equal opportunities or equal access to the job or housing markets or being treated as second class citizens or somehow intellectually inferior and less socially valuable. In the second case, linguistic discrimination could involve a language deemed as not being appropriate as a means of instruction in a particular state and thus not offering its speakers teaching in that language or a language variety unsuitable for delivering the national news and having an explicit policy about this.

Linguistic prejudice and discrimination have most probably existed as long as human language has existed since much of human cognition, and arguably language, is based on our abilities of categorization and analogy (Hofstadter and Sander 2013) and the ability to create complex categories not based on direct experience but on beliefs or the description and opinions of others: unicorns, pixies, God, Eskimos, the Maasai. Thus, knowledge is not always derived from direct empirical encounters and sense experience but from these innate abilities.

Indeed the negative effects of linguistic discrimination on individuals is documented as far back as the Book of Judges ((12: 5-6) in the Old Testament, which tells the tale of a group of people, the Gileadites, who have taken the fords of the Jordan against another group, the Ephraimites, and who use the pronunciation of the word *Sibboleth* to distinguish between the two peoples. The Gileadites pronounced this word, which in Hebrew means 'ear of grain' or 'torrent of water', with a palatal sibilant [ʃ] whilst the Ephraimites lacked this sound and thus pronounced it with an alveolar sibilant [s] (Leone 2009). Prospective crossers of the fords were made to say this word and anyone unable to pronounce it with the palatal pronunciation was seized and killed; we are told that forty-two thousand Ephraimites were killed.

Thus, the word shibboleth is used in English to designate any trait of language (or more widely a custom or belief) which distinguishes a particular class or group of people. What shibboleths reveal is that language like race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality or even haircut style is a human variable, which can become a marker of a category of people. Variables are sensitive to being associated with some type of social meaning, and this meaning can be analogically extended to all of the people in the category creating a stereotype. The way a person speaks a language or even the language they speak, be it through choice or necessity, can be imbued with social meaning (Eckert 2018) and subject to stereotyping. Thus, people who speak the same can suffer from overt or covert acts of violence and social exclusion.

In this article we make a distinction between the prejudice and discrimination towards (a) different languages and their speakers and (b) different non-standard varieties of the same language and their speakers and argue that whilst the discrimination and prejudice towards (a) has been denounced by international institutions and both national and international laws are in place to guarantee the rights of speakers of different languages, the same protection has not been afforded to speakers of non-standard varieties of a language. We examine the linguistic prejudice in Brazil towards non-standard varieties of Brazilian Portuguese and argue that such prejudices are ingrained within certain sections of Brazilian society and represent a developmental problem for the country. We conclude with a discussion of the effectiveness of efforts of linguists to combat linguistic prejudice based on the principle of error correction (Labov 1982) and, drawing on work by Cameron (2012) and Bourdieu (1986) suggest that linguistic prejudice cannot be disentangled from other types of prejudice and that linguists need to have a much deeper understanding of and engagement with the irrational values attached to linguistic forms. We put forward a number of suggestions as to the best ways for linguists to combat the linguistic prejudice and discrimination against non-standard varieties of languages. We suggest, amongst other things, that collaboration with academics from the social sciences is essential to provide evidence of the negative social and economic effects of linguistic prejudice and that engagement with the general public, speakers of non-standard varieties and policy makers is necessary to raise awareness of the issues.

## 2 Linguistic Discrimination against other languages vs. non-standard varieties of a single language.

The rights of peoples who speak different languages and the discrimination that both individuals and languages can be subjected to is a major international topic of concern. There is a NGO, Linguapax (http://www.linguapax.org/english), which is committed to protecting and promoting the revitalisation of the world's linguistic diversity, and there have been a number of international academic conferences dedicated to this topic[1], which culminated in the production of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights (1996) (for a discussion see Oliveira (2003). The United Nations, whilst not ratifying the aforementioned document, is quite explicit regarding its stance on language discrimination and the rights of peoples who speak languages which are considered minority languages in particular states. As early as 1992 the United Nations formally adopted the *Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities*[2](1992) in which it was agreed that the rights of linguistic minorities should be promoted and protected since they are an integral part of the states in which they reside and they contribute to the political and social stability of such states. More specifically, the declaration explicitly calls on member states to protect the linguistic identity of minorities and create favourable conditions to promote this identity, develop their language, and for individuals to be able to learn and be taught in their language. The declaration also makes explicit the right of linguistic minorities to 'use their own language, in private and public, freely and without interference and **any form of discrimination'**(Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities 1992) and that they should not be disadvantaged due to speaking their language. The text specifically says 'No disadvantage shall result for any person belonging to a minority'. Further to the adoption of this declaration, in 2013 the UN published a handbook, entitled *Language Rights of Linguistic Minorities: A Practical Guide for Implementation,* aimed to clarify what the rights of linguistic minorities are and in what ways states ought to respect the languages used by linguistic minorities since these are related to the preservation of the world's linguistic diversity.

The rights of people who speak non-standard forms of a language and who can constitute a minority in a particular state, have, to our knowledge, been absent from all international discussions on linguistic rights, despite these varieties contributing substantially to the worlds linguistic diversity and despite the linguistic prejudice and discrimination which exists towards some non-standard varieties and their speakers. The international emphasis is always focused on the protection of languages and the promotion of multilingualism.

Whilst we thoroughly and wholeheartedly agree with the aforementioned declarations and proposals, we would like to draw attention to the fact that non-standard varieties of a particular language can be extremely different from the standard and contribute significantly to global linguistic diversity. A world in which everyone spoke English, Spanish, Portuguese or Mandarin

[1] World Conference on Linguistic Rights, Barcelona 1996; World Congress on Language Policies, Barcelona 2002; Dialogue on Language Diversity, Sustainability and Peace, Barcelona 2004, to name just a few.

[2] https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/Minorities.aspx

in exactly the same way is inconceivable because variation and diversity within a single language is inherent to human language. Indeed, the distinction between languages, dialects and varieties of a language is largely a social, historical and political one. So, when it is stated that language can be an intrinsic and important marker of individual and group identity, it should be remembered that this can refer to **both** different languages, such as Portuguese and Chinese, **and** different varieties of the same language.

Likewise, linguistic prejudice and discrimination can apply to both. That people make intellectual, social and moral judgements based on a speaker's language variety has been proven experimentally by a number of different methods (Campbell-Kibler 2007; Williams 1976; Edwards 1984; Lambert et al. 1960; Kang and Rubin 2009). Indeed, linguistic prejudice leading to discrimination based on non-standard use of language has been documented within the education system (Seligman, Tucker, and Lambert 1972; Siegel 2010; Grainger 2011; Grainger and Jones 2013), the justice system (Rickford and King 2016), the housing market ((Purnell, Idsardi, and Baugh 1999; Baugh 2003) and in training courses and the job market (Baratta 2018; Seggie, Smith, and Hodgins 1986)). In sum, linguistic prejudice and discrimination within a particular language is real but it has not received a fraction of the attention that the discrimation towards different languages has been afforded. In our view this is due to the prejudices being so ingrained in society that they become the natural way of viewing the world. In what follows we present one such case from Brazil.

## 3 Language Prejudice in Brazil

The sociolinguistic situation in modern Brazil has been characterized as a polarized one (Lucchesi 2017; Mattos e Siva 2004) between the language of the upper classes who speak what is termed educated Brazilian Portuguese, which is also the language used in education, and the language of the masses who speak what has been termed popular Brazilian Portuguese, an umbrella term which includes numerous varieties of spoken Brazilian but which is usually characterised by a lack of agreement features on nouns and verbs. In educated Brazilian, just like in standard Portuguese, articles, nouns and adjectives all inflect for number and gender and display morphological agreement. Hence the English phrase 'the most interesting illustrated books' would be rendered as *os livro**s** ilustrado**s** mais interessante**s*** in which the underlined <o> are markers of masculine gender (the adjective *interessante* does not inherently inflect for gender) and bold <s> the plural marker. In popular Brazilian this phrase could be realised as *os livro ilustrado mais interessante* with no morphosyntactic plural agreement on the nouns or adjectives but merely on the article.

Regarding verb morphology, in educated Brazilian and standard Portuguese, verbs inflect for person and number and the pronoun is not obligatory. In popular Brazilian these person and number features can be significantly reduced to varying degrees depending on the variety; and there is a tendency for verbs to have explicit subject pronouns. This is illustrated below in (1) for the present indicative of the verb *amar* 'love' (adapted from Melo (1975: 99).
(1)

| | Educated Brazilian | Popular Brazilian |
|---|---|---|
| 1SG. *eu* | amo | eu amo |
| 2SG. *tu* | amas | tu ama |
| 2SG. *você* | ama | você ama |
| 3SG. *ele/ela* | ama | ele/ela ama |
| 1PL. *nós* | amamos | nos ama |
| 2PL. *vocês* | amam | vocês ama |
| 3PL. *eles/elas* | amam | eles/elas ama |

Thus the English phrase *We catch the fish* and *the kids catch the fish* would be rendered as (2) in educated Brazilian, in which the agreement markers are highlighted in bold, and as (3) in a variety of popular Brazilian. Note that these examples will be important at a later stage.

*(2) pega***mos** *o peixe; os menino***s** *pega***m** *o peixe*

(3) *nós pega o peixe; os menino pega o peixe*

The origins of the two types of Brazilian Portuguese is a debated topic but in the first manuals of the history of the Portuguese spoken in Brazil (Silva Neto 1976; Melo 1975) and in some more recent sociolinguistic studies (Mattos e Siva 2004; Lucchesi 2017) it is considered to be due to how the language was transmitted to successive generations. Educated Brazilian was supposedly passed on to speakers in a regular fashion, whilst popular Brazilian was the result of what is termed an irregular process of language transmission (*transmissão linguística irregular,* (Mattos e Siva 2004; Lucchesi 2017)), due to imperfect learning of the language by indigenous peoples and African slaves who then spread this imperfectly learned language across the whole expanse of the country.

Paixão de Sousa (2010) illustrates how, in the two aforementioned historical manuals (Silva Neto 1976; Melo 1975), languages are conceived as following a natural course in which they are born, they develop and reach their zenith, and then fall into decline and decay. Each of these stages can be identified with the complexity of their morphological systems. Educated Brazilian is clearly at the zenith whilst popular Brazilian is at the stage of decay as shown by its morphological system which is described as being *reduced, simplified, eroded, impoverished* and *deformed* (Paixão de Sousa 2010: 89) due to the contact with the more primitive languages of the African slaves and indigenous peoples whose languages were in the initial stage, that of being born and thus not as complex as the Portuguese standard. Popular Brazilian is therefore conceived as the result of being *disfigured*, *twisted* and *garbled* by these less developed peoples and its reduced morphological system is viewed as a scar on the language, as a result of the coarse and crude way it was learned; the following quotations exemplify these points

*"our popular language, speaking generally, is basically old Portuguese, distorted, or if you like, modified in certain aspects of its morphology and phonetics by the action of the Indians and negros."*

(Chaves de Melo: 90-91)

*The people who had Tupi as their mother tongue abandoned it and they adopted the new language. Naturally they could not master all of the workings and subtleties of this language; rather, they learned it badly, distorting it with a series of defects originating from their old linguistic habits…. the African negro also came to speak Portuguese badly, distorting it with the hallmark of their old linguistic habits…So: the Portuguese taken to Brazil took a crude and rough battering….. it was extremely distorted and corrupted in the mouths of the Indians and half-breeds, and in the mouths of the negros; it became isolated in many points of the national territory, which kept it away from the waves of civilization…. As you can see, there are many similarities between the Portuguese of the Indians and the Portuguese of the negros. That is, moreover, extremely natural, since both the Indian and the negro, in a primitive stage of civilization, learned Portuguese as a language when they were in difficult predicaments and they were obliged to learn it through necessity*

(Silva Neto, 1950:36)

As historical linguists we must denounce the validity of this explanation as to the origins of popular Brazilian and note that the more recent studies which still defend the origins of popular Brazilian due to 'irregular linguistic transmission'(Mattos e Siva 2004; Lucchesi 2017) in no way explain the origins of popular Brazilian in such prejudicial and racist terms. The present article, however, is not the place for an in-depth study of the origins of these different varieties of Portuguese, suffice to say, however, that the reduction of inflections in popular Brazilian is in line with the general tendency of all Indo-European languages to historically simplify their inflectional morphology especially in cases of colonial expansion and dialect mixing. Latin had in excess of 100 inflectional forms which were significantly reduced when Rome became a large Empire. Portuguese is the Romance Language with most inflections, approximately 50, and French, arguably the most prestigious Romance language, has the least with approximately 27. Indeed, the Indo-European language which is most simplified regarding its infections is undoubtedly English.

The Brazilian grammarian, Melo, was aware of these developments in French and English but he refused to accept that such a process could have occurred in Brazilian Portuguese, because such morphological simplification was not present, he thought, in his own variety of educated Brazilian but characteristic of popular Brazilian and embodied by the *matuto brasileiro*; the Brazilian residing in the countryside who is simple, crude and ignorant.

*One cannot deny the I[ndo] E[uropean] tendency, but I am of the opinion that the simplification in Brazil is not along those lines. Because it's evident that such a simplification constitutes a deviation and not a natural evolution….. and thus it should be considered a deviation, that, besides the simplified popular language, there exists a standard language with many inflections, this standard language still represents the linguistic ideal of the community. Thus, the attitude and situation of a Brazilian country boy is very different from that of a French or English man.*

(Melo, 1946:102).

The authors prejudicial opinions of barbarous Brazilian country boys lead him to conclude that the reduction of inflections and simplifications in this speech is a deviation and somehow unnatural as opposed to the natural simplification and reduction which took place in French and English; French and English gentlemen are not to be compared with Brazilian country boys. The result is that the author delegitimizes the forms of speech spoken by a significant proportion of the population. This is linguistic prejudice and is clearly related to the debates of the time around

the concepts of civilization and barbarism, influenced originally by theories of Darwinism and ideas of progress.

After independence of the colonies from the Spanish and Portuguese crowns 'the dichotomy civilisation/barbarism became the definitive axis through which the past and future of progress in Latin America would continue to be discussed for the entire century' (Obregón 2006). Europe was considered in a completed state of civilization and it was to this which the new states aspired; they were in a semi-civilised state and had to deal with the 'barbarous' autochthonous influences and large swathes of the countries which were sparsely populated and inhabited by unruly peoples. Any connection with Europe, especially the linguistic one, was viewed as an aspect of civilization. Thus, the educated Brazilian standard which very closely resembled the European Portuguese standard was a marker of civilization and order and the speech of the masses was considered as a barbarous aberration and deviation from this linguistic ideal. In Latin America, therefore, the aim was to civilize the territory and its people and this, naturally, included civilizing, refining and improving the barbarous linguistic habits which people had unfortunately adopted. The most effective way of achieving this was through the imposition of 'educated Brazilian Portuguese' in all forms of teaching and education.

The imposition of a standard is not necessarily negative, as is widely accepted in sociolinguistics. Indeed, there are numerous benefits of having a standard form for written language since it facilitates effective and efficient communication and contributes to the diffusion of knowledge. We are not advocating abandoning the standard but rather abandoning the unjust, damaging and incorrect views about non-standard varieties, including the origins of these forms (see also Scherre (2005); Cagliari (1989); Massini-Cagliari (2001)). Unfortunately these views still persist in modern Brazilian society and they represent, in our view, a serious impediment to social and economic development.

Evidence to the perpetuation of these views is attested by the civil response to the introduction of educational measures to foster a non-discriminative approach to non-standard varieties of Brazilian Portuguese. These measures took the form of a pedagogical text-book, *Por uma vida melhor* 'For a Better Life', which highlighted the differences between the spoken and written language and also addressed linguistic prejudice. The book attempted to make the point that non-standard pronunciations are not wrong or debased variants of the language but simply different; and different variants are appropriate in different contexts. These attempts, however, failed due to the ingrained prejudices in some sectors of Brazilian society against non-standard varieties of Portuguese.

The book was published as part of the *Live and Learn* collection of teaching books in 2011 aimed not at primary school children but at adults in the context of an official program called Education for Youngsters and Adults (*Educação de Jovens e Adultos*); the students on this programme had, for diverse reasons, not managed to learn to read and write in childhood. The book was developed by a NGO in collaboration with a publishing house. The content of the book is in line with the national directives[3] regarding didactic material that are set out and approved by the Ministry of Education and follows all the regulations established by the Parameters of the National

[3] Programa Nacional do Livro e do Material Didático.

Curriculum (*Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais*) for the teaching and learning of the Portuguese language.[4] In the context of this official programme, the Ministry of Education promotes the evaluation of books by education specialists which have been presented by the editors. The book in question was officially approved by the Ministry of Education and thus was distributed free of charge by the government to all students on the programme.

The controversial part of the book in question comes from volume two of the series and specifically from the chapter entitled "writing is different from speaking" (*escrever é diferente de falar*). The intention of the authors in this chapter is to have adult students understand that the language used to write is quite different to the one they use daily when speaking in their routine social and communicative situations. The chapter aims to introduce the concepts of a standard language and educated norm and touches upon the perception of spoken vernacular variants of Brazilian Portuguese. The authors do not advocate the use of such variants as part of the norm nor that these variants are learned by school children. The chapter mentions three constructions from popular Brazilian, which have already been discussed in this present article; for clarity these are repeated below in (4) along with glosses and the educated Brazilian forms. As mentioned previously, these constructions compared with those in educated Brazilian could be described as lacking nominal, adjectival and verbal agreement.
(4)

| Gloss | Educated Brazilian | Popular Brazilian |
|---|---|---|
| The most interesting illustrated books | Os livro**s** ilustrado**s** mais interessante**s** | Os livro ilustrado mais interessante |
| We catch the fish | Nós pega**mos** o peixe | Nós pega o peixe |
| The kids catch the fish | Os menino**s** pega**m** o peixe | Os menino pega o peixe |

The author of the chapter classifies these constructions as natural in spoken speech (Ramos 2011: 14–16) but warns that people who speak this way could become subject to linguistic prejudice. Specifically, the book states the following:
(5)

*You could be wondering; 'Can I say 'os livro?' [instead of os livro**s** with the plural marker on the noun as well as the article]. Of course you can. But be careful because, depending on the situation, you run the risk of being a victim of linguistic prejudice. Many people say what should and should not be said or written, taking the rules drawn up for the standard as a way of correcting all linguistic forms. The speaker, therefore, has to be able to use the appropriate linguistic variant for each situation.*

The aforementioned text book was a source of great polemic and attracted substantial media attention. A national news channel reported on the book with the headline that the Ministry of Education was 'defending that students do not need to follow certain grammatical rules to speak correctly' (Batista de Padua 2014). The book made the headlines of all the main national newspapers and the public reacted by posting comments on the online version of the newspapers

[4] Brasil. Secretaria de Educação Fundamental. *Parâmetros curriculares nacionais*: língua portuguesa. Brasília: Secretaria de Educação Fundamental, 1997. 144p.
http://portal.mec.gov.br/seb/arquivos/pdf/livro02.pdf

or writing to the newspapers. Many people, including some influential figures of the Brazilian political elite, considered that the Ministry of Education was endorsing the use of 'bad Portuguese' and the authors of the text book were described as: *enemies of good Portuguese, murderers of the language, a circle of false intellectuals, academic and linguistic Talibans*, and the book was deemed to be *the enshrinement of ignorance, or academic trash dressed up as cultural avant guard* (Leiser Baronas & Pagliarini Cox 2013).

Leiser Baronas and Pagliarini Cox (2003) provide and excellent analysis of these comments and note that the ideology underlying many of them is that there is only one legitimate and civilised variety of Portuguese, the standard, and all other varieties are barbarous aberrations. Indeed many of the adjectives used to describe the book are in the semantic field related to ignorance and lack of reasoning (*barbarity, aberration, stupidity, foolishness, madness*) and many complaints focus on the book being against the intellectual, social and moral progress of students (*disservice to students, licentiousness, reversal of values, demagogy*) (Leiser Baronas and Pagliarini Cox 2003: 83). These authors also note how the standard and its grammatical rules are viewed as analogous to laws and a type of Constitution of the language and, thus, not speaking or writing in accordance with the grammatical rules of the standard is tantamount to breaking the law – placing oneself outside civilized society. One commentator even says the following in (6), in imitation to the wording of the book detailed in (5).
(6)

*The authors of the criminal book could use another example: 'Can I kill someone I don't like? Of course you can. But be careful because, depending on the situation, you run the risk of being a victim of judicial prejudice.' Just as killing someone violates a rule, killing the language violates another. To condemn both violations is not prejudice at all. It is a civilizing principle.'*

Indeed, the book was hailed by some as being propaganda from the Workers Party (*Partido Trabalhador*), which was accused of *barbarizing the country* with a *primitive language* and returning it to a *tribal system where each person spoke how they wanted* (Leiser Baronas and Pagliarini Cox 2003:88-89). The then president of the party, Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, was attacked due to his speech also containing the popular Brazilian features described in the book (see also Leite (2008)), and some people saw the book as wanting to endorse the language of the Trade Unions, or more widely, the language of the *povão* (ibid:89); the word for 'the people' (*povo*) + the augmentative suffix -*ão*, which, in this case, adds a pejorative nuance to the word and can be translated as 'the (ignorant) masses'.

This term implies a recognition that the type of language described in the book is the actual language of a great many speakers of Brazilian Portuguese and conflicts with the view of Marcos Bagno (2002: 15) that, in Brazil, speakers are not aware of the variation present in Brazilian Portuguese. This author is of the view that one of the most dangerous and serious of all myths that compose the complex mosaic of linguistic prejudice in Brazil is the idea that Brazilian Portuguese is characterised by an amazing unity. The problem, we suggest, is not a general unawareness of the variation present in Brazilian Portuguese but a general unawareness and understanding of language variation and change in general. The assumption is that since there is one nomenclature for the language, 'Portuguese', then there must be one set of grammatical rules for the language. Anything else constitutes a barbaric breaking of the civilised laws of the language and is just wrong. This point of view is expressed by the response to the book chapter

of the former president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters, Marcos Vilaça's, represented below in (7) (taken from Leiser Baronas and Pagliarini Cox (2003:85)
(7)

*"One thing is to understand how language, a living organism, evolves but it is another thing to accept and endorse glaring mistakes" says Marcos Vilaça, president of the Brazilian Academy of Letters. "It's like teaching wrong times-tables. Four times three is always 12, on the outskirts of towns or in the palace."*

What these words by a respected and educated individual reveal is an ignorance of language. There is only one type of times-table but whilst there may be one way of designating the language, Portuguese, this label refers to a wide-array of different varieties of the language, each of which can be subject to different grammatical rules and principles.

Sadly, the non-standard features discussed in the pedagogical book (see (4)) are well-attested in the spoken language of many speakers, as evidenced by in-depth and sophisticated sociolinguistic studies. Scherre and Naro (2014) analysed the three variables discussed in the book in the speech of a community in Rio de Janeiro and concluded that the author of the book 'showed great linguistic sensitivity and presented structures that are genuinely natural in Brazilian Portuguese.'

## 4 The effects of linguistic prejudice

It is clear, therefore, that linguistic prejudice exists in Brazil and there is a tendency to correlate non-standard varieties with a lack of civilization. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that there exists a correlation between these varieties and social success and wealth. Unfortunately, these correlations are interpreted as being inherent and deterministic ones through the ideological process of 'iconization' (Irvine and Gal 2000a) in which the linguistic forms which represent a group of people are interpreted in line with the stereotypical qualities associated with this group and therefore come to define them and determine their non-linguistic qualities and characteristics. The rich are socially and economically more successful and have more opportunities due to their enhanced mental abilities and rationality. They are more sophisticated, more cultured, more advanced; in short, they are more civilized. Their way of speaking reflects these aspects and is contrasted with the irrational, spontaneous, illogical, albeit creative, underclass and their speech, which is often characterized as being a polluted, debased, denigrated and even barbaric form of the language.

It is difficult to establish, however, how such attitudes about non-standard varieties of the language and their speakers directly translate into cases of linguistic discrimination and to therefore measure and quantify the actual effects of linguistic prejudice. It is a valid hypothesis, however, that such attitudes have negative effects on well-being, self-esteem and perceptions of self-worth of the individual. Such effects, therefore, could be linked to the fact that some speakers of non-standard varieties of Brazilian Portuguese do not fully engage with the establishment and the education system. Language can be an intrinsic and important marker of individual and group identity. Linguistic prejudice within the education system can place children in the unfair and disadvantaged position in which they feel inherently inferior and incompetent for something over which they have had no control: they are made to feel from an early age that their speech is bad

and wrong, and consequently they themselves and their families are somehow bad and have less worth than others. As Siegel (2010) has pointed out, this is a no-win strategy since the outcome is either that such attitudes are internalized by the speakers, producing linguistic insecurity and affecting their self-worth and eventually resulting in poor school performance; or, students can react against such opinions and reject them together with the education system and the supposed 'civilized society' which reinforces and perpetuates them.

Whilst subsequent studies have shown that the initial assumptions regarding the effects of teacher expectations on the intelligence of children, known as the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal and Jacobson 1968) were largely exaggerated (Jussim and Harber 2005), it is still recognised that teacher expectations often do play a crucial role in student achievement (Cooper 2000: 339; Boehlert 2005: 491; Zabel and Zabel 1996). Indeed, the results of numerous studies support the premise that higher self-esteem supports academic performance since students participate more actively in class (Philips, Smith, and Modaff 2004) which translates into better results (Turner and Patrick, 2004). Studies also find a positive correlation between students' level of self-esteem, their reading ability and their academic achievement (Hisken 2011). Likewise, lower self-esteem can lead to behaviour problems (Boehlert, 2005; Guerra, Williams, & Sadek, 2011) and has also been linked to school delinquency (Morrison and Cosden 1997; Rosenberg, Schooler, and Schoenbach 1989) and to increased aggression in some children (Donnellan et al. 2005).

The reasons which cause low self-esteem in students and low expectations of students by teachers are manifold (Schweiger 2008) and, in turn, these factors are only two of an array of interrelated factors which can affect the academic performance and engagement of students overall. Whilst we recognise that caution must be taken not to jump to oversimplified conclusions regarding the effects of linguistic prejudice and the ways it can manifest itself as linguistic discrimination within an educational setting, there are studies which suggest that the attitudes of teachers towards non-standard forms of a language can have effects on the educational development of children (Bourdieu 1973; Lucas 1999; Bowles 1976; Willis 1993; Godley, Carpenter, and Werner 2007). We maintain that in Brazil the effects of linguistic prejudice can be an aggravating factor in a student's education and one which hitherto has received very little attention in a country which faces serious problems related to student drop-out rates. In the 2017 annual publication *Education at a Glance,* published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the data showed that only half of all Brazilian students successfully complete what is termed *ensino médio* (secondary education) in the expected time (three years), and that after this time 26% of students leave school without any qualifications. This figure is double the average of the other thirteen countries analysed (average drop-out rate of 12%). Moreover, after five years of trying to complete secondary education in Brazil the drop-out rate increases to 41% of students, which is just short of the double of the average of the thirteen other countries. Note that these data only include students in full-time education. According to figures[5], in Brazil only 53% of all 15 year olds are in secondary education and more than half of the population aged between 25 and 64 have not competed basic secondary education.

[5] https://oglobo.globo.com/sociedade/educacao/indice-de-alunos-que-abandonam-ensino-medio-no-brasil-o-dobro-de-outros-paises-21810388

To our knowledge, no studies have related drop-out rates to linguistic prejudice and discrimination but it is hard not to make the connection given that the education system teaches a variety of the language which is foreign to most students (Perini 2003) and does not have any consciousness of or policy towards linguistic prejudice. Such an education system runs the risk of producing students who underperform or producing individuals who feel disenfranchised from society and even angry at those who consider them second-class citizens. Both outcomes must ultimately have negative effects on the social and economic development of the country since education is crucial to sustained development and poverty reduction. When combined with sound economic policies, education is considered a key factor in promoting social well-being and economic growth because it can have a positive impact on national productivity and a transformative effect on life styles and the ability of nations to compete in the global economy. According to UNESCO[6], the most pressing problem in Brazil is social inequality. This social inequality, correlated with parental income, is particularly salient within the education system. Indeed, the World Economic Forum has noted that in Brazil 'the educational system is failing children from less wealthy families'. Therefore, a fundamental developmental challenge for Brazil is to minimize the extent to which, within the education system, having less wealth can lead to being less valued and having fewer opportunities when leaving education. In response to this challenge, UNESCO notes how cultural differences can be correlated with differences of income and how a positive awareness and a favourable appreciation of cultural diversity can lead to economic and social change and the benefits of positive attitudes towards linguistic diversity in the context of indigenous languages and the role of these languages in education. However, a significant proportion of the population of Brazil are monolingual Portuguese speakers[7] and the variable which correlates most strongly with differences in income, is not a different autochthonous Latin American culture or language but a different variety of Portuguese. Again, the prejudices towards non-standard varieties of a language are largely absent from discussions at an international level but these prejudices can, we argue, represent an impediment to social and economic sustained development.

We would like to conclude this section by stressing that we are not advocating that in Brazil there ought not to be a standard or that students should not be taught to write in Portuguese which has the standard nominal and verbal agreements (see also Scherre (2005); Cagliari (1989); Massini-Cagliari (2001)). In Brazil, knowledge to write and speak formally is vital for social and economic advancement and therefore not acquiring the standard can make speakers feel condemned to a life of poverty and also disenfranchised from society. The important point is that when teaching the standard the education system should not discriminate against non-standard varieties; this has been termed the 'eternal contradiction' of the Brazilian education system (Massini-Cagliari 2004). In order to achieve this it is necessary to change the preconceived opinions about the correctness of language, its legitimate forms and especially the opinions associated with non-

[6] http://www.unesco.org/new/en/brasilia/culture/cultural- diversity/

[7] This is not to say that Brazil is not a multilingual country since it certainly is (Cavalcanti et al. 2018). However, despite there being approximately 200 different languages spoken within its territory (roughly 170 indigenous languages and the others being of mainly European or Asian origin) it is also true that the vast majority of Brazilians are monolingual Portuguese speakers (Massini-Calgiari 2004:4); in the 2016 census the indigenous population only represented 0.7% of the total population of the country.

standard varieties of the language. In what follows, we discuss the best ways to achieve this objective and the role of linguistic research in achieving it. Our discussion is not only relevant to Brazil but can be extended to any other country.

# 5 A strategy for linguists in their desire to combat linguistic prejudice and discrimination

## 5.1 The role of linguists and linguistic research in language debates and their potential to influence social change

In section 2, the point was made that whilst non-standard languages, their speakers and their cultures have been given formal protection via rights in international and national declarations and the discrimination against languages and speakers is a matter of concern for academia, national governments and international institutions, the same attention and linguistic rights have not been afforded to non-standard varieties of a language and their speakers. The question, however, is whether the legislation of linguistic rights would be effective at combating linguistic prejudice and discrimination. With reference to linguistic human rights and particularly the right for education in one's mother tongue, Skutnabb-Kangas (2001:211) noted a number of positive developments which 'might give some cautious reasons for hope' (ibid) but also highlighted the limits of legislation and good intentions and the need for 'implementation, monitoring, and proper complaints procedures'(ibid). This question of the effectiveness of rights enshrined in law is particularly pertinent in the Brazilian context in which laws and legislation exist against racial discrimination but racial discrimination continues to be a problem. Linguistic discrimination will not be erased by merely having a law against it; it is necessary to tackle the underlying problem which is the inherent linguistic prejudices present in society due to linguistic ideologies. More recently, within sociolinguistics, the notion of linguistic rights (Skuttnab-Kangas & Phillipson, 1997; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) has been criticised for its theoretical underpinnings; sociolinguistic theorizing and activism is currently more concerned with the notion of linguistic citizenship (see, for example Lim, Stroud, and Wee, 2018; Stroud, 2001, 2018).

Linguistic citizenship is a complex notion which is difficult to define succinctly; it involves an awareness of the importance of language (including, in the present context, varieties of the same language) and its relatedness to other sociopolitical issues regarding social and economic equality. Linguistic citizenship implies an active participation on the part of speakers to exercise control over their ways of speaking and demand equal rights and equal protection by the law; linguistic citizenship conceives language 'as a political and economic "site of struggle"' (Stroud 2001:353)[8]. There are many aspects of this concept which we view favourably and which we consider to have the potential to empower speakers and enact social change. However, at the same time we are critical of this concept and its overall effectiveness, especially in the Brazilian context, since, in our view, some conceptualizations of this notion can be overly abstract and

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[8] It is in this way that linguistic citizenship cannot do away with linguistic rights (see also (May 2018) and any strategy against combating linguistic prejudice cannot frame itself around either linguistic rights or linguistic citizenship exclusively since 'rights need to be fought for through acts of linguistic citizenship' (Premsrirat and Bruthiaux 2018: 164).

inwardly academic-looking; its proponents seek to deconstruct what they term “essentialist understandings of language and identity” (Stroud 2001:353) but fail to realise that such understandings, in some societies, represent a reality for speakers; to fail to understand and engage with this reality means that the whole concept of linguistic citizenship runs the risk of becoming entirely irrelevant to speakers and ineffectual in important language debates. A case in point is the role of standardisation and standard forms of languages; for Stroud (2018) and Lee (2018) these concepts subvert natural linguistic fluidity since they presuppose a unified and correct object instead of seeing language as a form of ‘social practice’ which is ‘not a fully circumscribed object’ but ‘a social activity whose regularity is the outcome of temporarily conventionalised patterns of usage’ (Wee, 2001:12). Indeed, within some theorizing around the notion of linguistic citizenship some authors seem to advocate abandoning the term ‘language’ altogether (see Milani and Jonsson (2018) and a criticism by Petrovic (2018)).

In Brazil, however, there is a definite concept of the Portuguese language being the official language of the country. Moreover, there is a concept of a written standard and a standard of spoken usage and these standards are related to concepts of civility, order, good conduct and good management and the inability to master such standards or a disregard for them is related to concepts of barbarism, pandemonium and bad conduct. To deny this linguistic reality and seek to subvert it is to fail to understand the object of study, which in turn can render the objectives of linguistic citizenship null since one cannot expect to encourage speakers to actively engage in a demand for their linguistic rights and take control over their use of language if one does not fully understand what the concept of language means to them.

Although not directly critical of the concept of linguistic citizenship, Deborah Cameron (Cameron 2012b, 2012a) has been critical of linguists in respect to their irrelevant role in important social debates about language; she decries their insistence on denouncing the whole discourse of value and norms related to language and the advocacy of all different forms of a language as valid and legitimate. For her, the role of normativity and value in language is crucial and linguists who seek to deconstruct, devalue or dismiss these concepts are failing to truly understand their object of study. Cameron (2012b:vii) coined the term verbal hygiene to refer to the ‘motley collection of discourses and practices through which people attempt to “clean up” language and make its structure or its use conform more closely to their ideals of beauty, truth, efficiency, logic, correctness and civility’. She argues that it is an inherent part of language that speakers observe and reflect upon it and that there are norms and values associated with linguistic usage: “our norms and values differ…[but]…what remains constant is that we have norms and values” (ibid:9). With specific reference to the role of linguists she notes that [it is] ‘our failure with engaging with the underlying logic of verbal hygiene, which makes us so irrelevant and ineffective in such important debates’ (Cameron 2012a).

A case in point is Brazil where linguistic prejudices are extremely ingrained in the collective consciousness of the nation, as evidenced by the reaction of the public to the book discussed in section 3; people have passionate and politicized views on language and they relate standard language use to civility and progress. In this country, however, linguists generally insist that ‘*the different varieties of a language are not ugly or beautiful, right or wrong, good or bad, elegant*

*or inelegant; they are simply different'* (Fiorin 2002: 114). As Cameron has pointed out, such statements do not fully understand or give credit to the important role which value plays in language and how language can be related to other social ideologies and preoccupations. One cannot combat linguistic prejudice via such statements since they run against everything which speakers implicitly know about language: some forms **are** SOCIALLY better and more elegant and much more useful in being perceived as successful, educated and even beautiful. Thus linguists are largely ignored since their views are interpreted as opinions from the far-left, which blindly advocate the acceptance of all types of diversity.

Recently, the journal *Language and Society* published, in a single edition, a number of contributions to a discussion around the role of sociolinguistic research in social change. Lewis (2018) led the discussion with a critique of Labov's *principle of error correction* which assumes that social change can be achieved when researchers share their knowledge with the public, policy makers and other institutions. Lewis questions the effectiveness of such efforts and suggests that researchers ought to abandon the aim of 'objectivity' in sociolinguistic research, as promoted by Labov (1982), in favour of adopting a more critically reflective approach (Gergen 2009: 12). Lewis highlights the power of language ideologies and the different material, social and institutional pressures which work on any types of inequality. Indeed, much of what Lewis writes is in line with Cameron's discussion of verbal hygiene and her emphasis on the importance of power and history in determining value and on the use of verbal hygiene practices as a proxy for a variety of social, moral and political concerns. Indeed, such notions are reminiscent of Pierre Bourdieu's conception of language not merely as a means of communication but also as 'an instrument of action and power" (Bourdieu 1991: 37) in which linguistic interchanges are considered as 'relations of symbolic power in which the power relations between speakers and their respective groups are actualized'. What is clear from Bourdieu's work is that the different values attached to different ways of speaking are a reflection of other social inequalities. The powerful in society have historically fashioned it so that their ways of speaking and their cultural and aesthetic mores, conceptualised as cultural capital, are attributed the highest value. Bourdieu argues that in modern societies this hereditary transmission of cultural capital receives disproportionately greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies, as the direct, visible forms of transmission tend to be more strongly censored and controlled" (Bourdieu 1986). In his framework, societies are compared to markets which function as a system and social variables (including speech) are assigned a value. People, within this system, are continuously subjected to positive or negative reinforcements and thus 'acquire durable dispositions which are the basis of their perception and appreciation' of the values attached to these social variables. In order for a form of speech to be of high value it must be measured against other types of speech which must be devalued, and the whole market must be convinced of these relative values[9].

[9] It must be pointed out that much of this thinking is incorporated in the concept of linguistic citizenship, which draws attention to the fact that language is a human variable and its speakers, and the language variety itself, can, for historical reasons, suffer from material and structural inequalities in society which then transfer into what is termed 'valuational discrimination'. Linguistic citizenship seeks to draw attention to the link between language ideologies, structural and material inequalities and measures of social value and highlight the importance of addressing all of these in social change (see Stroud 2010)

One's linguistic expression is an ingrained part of what Bordieu terms one's *habitus*, which is a set of character traits, which are instilled and imprinted upon one in early childhood and which predispose individuals to act and react in particular ways. For Bourdieu, language is entwined and intimately related to other types of social variables. For social change to happen one has to change the rigged value system which requires a reconfiguration of the whole social system. Likewise, Lewis (2008) highlights that for social change to take place one must move away from an emphasis on the beliefs of individuals and a quest to correct these beliefs, towards an analysis of the political, historical and social reasons which support discriminative ideologies and the social and material structures which endorse and promote such ideologies.

If we accept this view of language as a complex social variable which is intimately related to other social variables, it then follows that people's views about speech cannot entirely be disentwined from their views about other social variables. Therefore, a strategy to combat linguistic prejudice and discrimination based on a theory of error correction alone will not suffice since linguistic prejudice can often not be about any particular linguistic feature at all but can merely act as a proxy for other types of prejudices (Bucholtz 2018). Indeed, it has been proven experimentally that linguistic prejudice and discrimination can be independent of linguistic features by phenomena such as *Reverse Linguistic Stereotyping* (Kang and Rubin 2009; Rubin 2002) and *Erasure* (Flores and Rosa 2015; Irvine and Gal 2000b; Lewis 2018). Both refer to a type of prejudice whereby attributions of a speaker's group membership trigger distorted evaluations of that person's speech, i.e. they are perceived as speaking non-standard even though such features are not present in their speech.

Returning to the discussion of non-standard features of Brazilian Portuguese in the pedagogical textbook discussed in section 3, one can view the treatment of these features as a relatively mild attempt at error correction, which was augmented when Brazilian linguistics came together, due to the media back-lash against this book, to produce a collection of works (Ação educativa - assessoria 2011) whose title was the same as the controversial pedagogical publication *Por uma vida melhor* 'for a better life' but with the sub-title 'Intellectuals, researchers and teachers speak about the book'. The contribution contains numerous articles defending the book, most of which are underpinned by the theory of error correction. It also comes with a list of online videos, news reports and interviews in which academics, much to their credit, defend the book and tackle the controversial question of linguistic prejudice in a format which is much more accessible to the general public.

It is difficult to measure the success of such well-intentioned efforts by colleagues. However, linguistic prejudice still exists in Brazil and if such methods have failed or not been entirely successful we would suggest that it is due to a strategy based merely on error correction and a lack of appreciation of the significant role which the notion of value plays in language attitudes and how this value is related to other prejudices[10]. The 'objective' and linguistically sound facts

[10] It must be noted, however, that the work of Marcos Bagno who has been instrumental and influential in introducing the concept of linguistic prejudice in Brazil (Bagno 2002) does indeed empahsize how linguistic prejudice is often used as a proxy for other types of prejudice.

of linguists did not tackle the real problem of linguistic prejudice in Brazil: the historical and socio-political contexts which can disadvantage and even vilify the poor.

Does this mean, however, that there are no benefits to the principle of error correction and that linguists have no role to play? We maintain that there are benefits and linguists do indeed have an important role to play, however, the knowledge and efforts of linguists need to be applied strategically to the places in which they can have maximal effect. Below we outline some suggestions.

## 5.2 Suggestions to combat linguistic prejudice and discrimination

First and foremost, we consider that linguists need to partake much more actively in community collaborations (Snell 2018; Mallinson et al. 2011; Mallinson and Charity Hudley 2018; Wolfram, Reaser, and Vaughn 2008), especially with speakers of non-standard varieties[11] since these speakers should play a crucial role in questions related to their varieties (Avineri et al. 2018; Piller 2016; Bucholtz 2018; Rickford and King 2016). Such community collaborations, however, should not be restricted to these speakers alone but also involve educational practitioners, speakers of standard varieties, politicians and policy makers. The aim should be to ascertain the different language ideologies at play and to ensure that the understandings of language by linguists are not directly in contrast to those of speakers. Linguists must avoid the trap of merely focusing on the objective structural facts of language and avoiding the social value attached to language varieties, thus alienating themselves from speakers in their attempts to educate them about the objective structural facts and having their views perceived as being unrealistic, quixotic, politicised and even patronizing. Linguists need to have a much deeper understanding of and tolerance for the irrational values attached to linguistic variables

Tolerance for such valorizations, however, does not necessarily imply a lack of will to change them, especially if they are negative and prejudicial. It is important, however, for linguists to bear in mind that the values attached to non-standard stigmatized forms of speech are not directly related to particular linguistic features or facts but emotional responses to social classes of people and their language use. Combatting linguistic prejudice and discrimination is ultimately about reconfiguring the social system which historically has been constructed to devalue certain classes of people, identified by their language in addition to a selection of (non-mutually exclusive) human variables: race, ethnicity, customs, wealth, class etc.. Social change can come about via policy change and policy change can be encouraged if there are sound economic and developmental reasons to enact changes. We have argued in this article that linguistic prejudice and discrimination in Brazil represents a developmental challenge for the country, however, this conclusion comes merely from a common sense analysis of the question in which it seems obvious that an education system which teaches a standard that few speak (Perini 2003) and has no awareness of matters of linguistic prejudice must have negative effects on students' educational

[11] In Brazil there are examples of good practice in this respect with indigenous communities; the speakers themselves play a central role in discussions about the written forms of their language (Fargetti 2006). Note, however, that we are not proposing that non-standard forms of a language have a different orthographic form from the standard.

development and this ultimately hinders economic and social development. However, the effects of linguistic prejudice and discrimination on the econmic and social development of nations have not been fully addressed in the academic literature and not fully appreciated by international organisations. There is a role here for linguists via rigorous experimental studies as to the negative social and economic effects of linguistic prejudice. For example, the effects on students' performance in the education system, school drop-out rates, the views and engagement of individuals with society and the establishment, the maintenance of unjust social divisions and civil unrest. In order to elaborate these sophisticated studies linguists need to collaborate with colleagues in other disciplines, especially the social sciences, to explore how linguistic prejudices are related to and can be used as a proxy for other types of prejudices and their effects on society.

Language prejudice and discrimination needs to be put on the national agenda so that politicians, policy makers and the public realise that it exists and its possible negative effects on the social and economic development of the country. It is necessary to raise awareness about such matters outside academia and to involve the general public; the most appropriate method to accomplish this task is not via academic articles or books. We would therefore like to highlight an excellent web-resource related to an ongoing project by researchers at Manchester Metropolitan University in the United Kingdom. The project is called the Accentism Project (https://accentism.org/, see also the hashtag #Accentism on Twitter) and it is entirely focused on language prejudice and discrimination. The novelty of this project lies in the interactive website which aims to uncover and challenge language prejudice and discrimination in everyday life via publishing stories, which the public submit of their own experiences of linguistic prejudice and discrimination. The stories are both upsetting and enraging but they do indeed fulfil the aim of the project which is to evidence the nature and impact of linguistic prejudice and how it operates on individuals and can take the form of discrimination in a wide range of contexts.

Once there is a growing awareness of the problems that linguistic prejudice and discrimination can have on both individuals and also societies, linguistic research, even that based on the analysis of particular structural features of speech and underpinned by a theory of error correction, can then help to empower individuals who are discriminated against and also help to change policies and even perceptions about non-standard usage. Note, however, that, as pointed out by Moore and Spencer (under review), there needs to be a shift in how sociolinguistic research views and expresses the relationship between standard and non-standard forms. This relationship is usually defined in terms of levels of formality and stigma but these researchers present evidence to suggest that such a distinction makes little theoretical sense. They argue that non-standard forms can have a wide array of social, semantic and pragmatic functions (see also Snell (2013) which the distinction informal/formal or stigmatized/non-stigmatized fails to successfully capture since it ignores the nuanced usage of non-standard forms and merely categorizes them as linguistic variable equivalents of standard forms. Moreover, the authors also note that such a simplistic alignment of non-standard forms with a lack of formality can have undesirable consequences since it can 'enable inaccurate and potentially damaging discourse about how children might come to acquire, manage and manipulate different language styles' (ibid:6). They make the interesting point that the linguistic nuances, linguistic dexterity and communicative competence which young students of non-standard varieties can exhibit could be taken advantage of and built upon in classrooms to extend their understanding of the use of language in accordance to style, context and communicative function and also to increase their use of features of Standard English.

However, they note that '[T]his kind of communicative competence remains unacknowledged in educational contexts, in part….because it remains unacknowledged in much sociolinguistic research"(ibid:32).

Linguists can also contribute to the creation of materials, accessible to the general public, which attempt to deconstruct the prejudices involved around different social/ethnic classes and their speech; a limited number of such publications are available in Portuguese (Bagno 2001; Possenti 2009, 1998, 2001, 2000). Within an English-language context Oliver Kamm (2016) in an article for the Times complains about the lack of publications by specialists on the topic of language for non-academic audiences; he notes how in any bookshop one could find non-technical books on a number of complex topics (the solar system, the chemical elements, the evolution of species) but that apart from the publications by Steven Pinker and David Crystal, there is not much on the topic of language for general readers.

Finally, we propose that one of the most effective ways to combat linguistic prejudice and discrimination would be to incorporate materials on language variation and change and (socio)historical linguistics into the education syllabus of children at all levels of education, and, of course, into teacher-training programmes. Just as students learn about the history of their respective countries, it would be informative and beneficial if they learned about the history of their respective language(s): how they came to acquire their modern names, how they changed and evolved at different periods of time, leading up to their standardisation and modern mode of writing. Knowledge of the origin of non-standard varieties and how they evolved, in contrast to the evolution of the standard, and in contrast to the evolution of the standards in other prestigious languages, can help people understand that features of non-standard languages are not inherently bad but merely different and such features are shared by many different international and prestigious languages. Thus, there is no inherent correlation between linguistic features and physical and mental traits. By accepting at an early age that linguistic prejudices can exist and analysing how these prejudices came about and can be related to other types of prejudices, individuals can come to deconstruct and challenge such prejudices. However, if linguistics were to produce school materials they would have to come with notes for both teachers and the parents of students to make them realise that the information is not incorrect or politicised but scientifically sound. Moreover, in order for such teaching materials not to be rejected and spurned by society at large, as was the case with the Brazilian text book discussed above, it is necessary, once again, for linguists to engage with educational practitioners and policy makers so that there is a consensus regarding how the education system deals with and challenges the negative and harmful opinions about non-standard varieties. Such policies need to be accepted and defended by politicians, teachers and linguists alike. Again, the key to convincing others as to the need for such policies is through arguments that they will be beneficial and advantageous not only for the development of children who speak non-standard varieties of a language but for society as a whole.

It is through the combined effort of collaborative projects with colleagues in other fields of research and with the general public that an awareness of the issues can be raised, and evidence provided that linguistic prejudice towards non-standard varieties of a language is a reality, that language can often be used as a substitute for other types of prejudices and it can manifest itself as discrimination, which can pose a challenge and obstacle to social and economic development.

More collaborative work is also necessary to work more closely with speakers, educational practitioners and policy makers to propose sensible and viable solutions to combat linguistic prejudice and discrimination, which will in essence combat social inequality and injustice.

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